

ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting of Monday, 05 March 2007
Mansfield Community Center (MCC) Conference Room

MINUTES

1. The meeting was **called to order** by Acting Chair Jay Ames at 7:07p. Members present: Jay Ames, Kim Bova, Scott Lehmann, Blanche Serban. Others present: Jay O'Keefe (staff), Betty Stern (staff), Cynthia van Zelm (Downtown Partnership), Kimberly Graves (*the Chronicle*), Eda Easton, Yves and Carol Kraus. To accommodate guests, the order of the agenda was changed.

2. Storrs Center Project. Cynthia van Zelm reported on the status of the Storrs Center Project proposed for land across Rt. 195 from E.O. Smith High School. An application to rezone the site as a Special Design District, permitting mixed residential and commercial development, has been submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). The application includes design guidelines (signage, plantings, etc.) that may be of interest to the Committee. Ms. van Zelm urged members to attend a 28 Mar 07 presentation on the application at the Municipal Building.

A site plan for the Project will be submitted to the PZC later this year. The current Concept Plan calls for a small town-owned Town Square (near the present intersection of Dog La. and Rt. 195) and another small open area among buildings between Rt. 195 and the Storrs Post Office. The Committee wondered if these areas were large enough to accommodate events like the Festival on the Green and informal outdoor performances. Their proximity to Rt. 195 was also a concern because of traffic noise and hazards; it might be preferable to move the Town Square to the Center's interior.

Commercial space will be owned by the developer. The current Concept Plan envisions relatively small spaces for small businesses. According to Ms. van Zelm, planning for types of occupants ("casting") won't begin for several months. At present, approximately 5-10K ft² of space has been allocated to "civic/community" uses, up to 40K ft² for offices, and up to 200K ft² for commercial use. A co-op art gallery might fit in the "civic/community" category. The Committee was pleased that project managers are thinking in terms of "live-work units" and "art galleries or studios" ("Storrs Center Project moves closer to reality", *the Chronicle*, 11 Jan 07). However, space will have to be affordable if the development is to attract artists as tenants.

3. Public comment. All of the public comments related to the controversy over the MCC's removal on 06 Feb 07 of one of George Jacobi's photographic collages, following complaints from several MCC members who saw it as making a "political statement".

On 15 Feb 07 the Committee wrote to Parks and Recreation Director Curt Vincente, strongly objecting to the removal as "irregular" and proposing a procedure for dealing with complaints; a copy was sent to Town Manager Matt Hart. Mr. Hart also received a letter, dated 21 Feb 07 and signed by 17 Mansfield residents, characterizing the removal as "arbitrary" and requesting "that the Arts Advisory Committee adopt, and make available to the public, a policy and complaint procedure governing exhibits in the MCC and other venues under its purview."

At its 26 Feb 07 meeting, the Town Council passed a motion “to request that the Mansfield Arts Advisory Committee develop a policy or set of procedures governing the display of artwork at the Mansfield Community Center and other publicly owned spaces where art is displayed exclusive of the public schools, for review and approval by the Town Council. And, further, to request that the Arts Advisory Committee, when undertaking this task, consult with and solicit comment from the Mansfield Recreation Advisory Committee[,], other advisory committees, staff and other interested members of the community.”

Yves Kraus, Carol Kraus, and Eda Easton all expressed the view that what was shocking in this case was not the photographic collage but the fact that the complaints of a few people had triggered its removal and deprived other members of the community of the opportunity to see the work and make up their own minds about its meaning. Ms. Kraus suggested that citing some of the American Library Association’s guidelines in our policy might give it more weight. Mr. Kraus thought a well-designed procedure for dealing with complaints would go a long way toward solving the problem. Ms. Easton suggested that it might be useful to have an opening reception at the beginning of each exhibit period at which the public could meet the artists and hear them talk about their work.

Jay A. reviewed the history of art displays at the MCC, noting that until the current quarter there had been no controversy over any display. The Committee does ask that artists include, in their applications, photos of the type of work they propose to exhibit, but it does not check every work before it goes up. He is reluctant to exclude certain types of art as a matter of policy, though he agrees that certain works would not be suitable for display at the MCC. He believes a framework for discussing applications and a procedure for dealing with complaints will be more useful than a policy statement.

Scott argued that some sort of policy statement should be drafted to give applicants guidance; guidelines will have to be somewhat vague, but examples of works the Committee would not approve could help give them content. He noted that the Committee has indicated that art displayed at the MCC should be appropriate for a family setting [one application form, though not the one now available at the MCC reception desk, says that “Applications to exhibit will be judged by the Arts Advisory Committee on the basis of originality, artistic merit, and suitability for a family setting”].

Jay O’K. explained the MCC staff’s reasoning in removing the Jacobi work. The MCC is not an art museum, and its patrons do not arrive with the same expectations that they would bring to a museum or gallery. Accordingly, it seemed reasonable to accommodate those expectations by removing a work some patrons found offensive.

It was agreed that Committee members would consider the issue individually and come to the next meeting with written proposals concerning exhibit policy and procedures. Written comments were also solicited from the MCC administration. It was also agreed that, for now, the Committee will focus on MCC policy/procedures.

4. Minutes of the 08 Jan 07 meeting were approved as written.

5. MCC art displays.

- a. To follow up on Beverly Rigler's question about whether sunlight in the sitting room could damage works displayed there, Jay O'K. consulted Philip Hollister of the Benton Museum. Mr. Hollister reported that his measurements of **sitting-room light levels** "ranged from 2200 footcandles [fc] in the direct sunlight to 130 fc just out of direct sun to 85 fc on the wall opposite the direct sun. At the museum we use under 10 fc for works on paper and fabrics. Oil paintings can take a lot more, but we rarely go above 30-40. So as you can see, the levels in the room would be harmful to most artwork." He did not say whether three months in the room could produce perceptible damage. In any case, artists should be warned that light-levels are far above museum levels and are potentially damaging.
- b. Jay O'K reported that the physical plant people think a rod could probably be installed across the top of the **2-sided display case** to permit hanging flat art there, provided it does not have to bear too much weight. The Committee would like to know how much weight is too much; a rod that could bear only 10 pounds would not be very useful.
- c. An application to exhibit watercolors has been received from **Lori Smolin**; the photos included with the application indicate that the work is suitable for display. **Frank Krasicki** has not yet submitted a CD with photos of the sort of works he would like to exhibit. Further planning of MCC exhibits was deferred to the April meeting.

Exhibit Period	Entry cases		Sitting room		Hallway	
	Double-sided	Shelves	Upper	Lower	Long (5)	Short (2)
15 Jan – 01 Apr	Eda Easton (sculpture)			Geo. Jacobi (collage photography) REMOVED	Beverly Rigler (framed art quilts)	
01 Apr – 15 Apr	Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC) (children's art)			MAC?	MAC or Rigler	
15 Apr – 15 Jul			Jay Ames (abstracts)		Jay Ames (abstracts)	

6. Adjourned at 9:13p. Next meeting: 7:00p, Monday, 02 Apr 07.

Scott Lehmann, Acting Secretary, 06 Mar 07